

Class Project

Now Playing on a Computer Near You

While the Hollywood pundits were chatting up the Oscars, a handful of creative students at Bearden High School and their teacher got their own red carpet moment recently when the school held a special assembly to premiere their “Bearden Public Schools: Where Parents Make a Difference,” an interactive DVD.

The DVD was the brainchild of Pearlie Newton, who heads up the district’s Parental Involvement Plan mandated by No Child Left Behind. The district is required annually to send information about its schools to all the parents. Rather than send the traditional printed brochures, Pearlie asked Teresa Hopkins in January 2005 if her multimedia class could produce a DVD about the school district.

Teresa signed on as producer and then sold her students on the production. For the past two semesters, six or seven students worked on the project. They shot photos and video; interviewed principals, superintendents, and staff; created graphics; edited audio and video; and burned 300 DVDs. In the process, they used skills they had learned in publishing, computer applications, and multimedia that has opened to rave reviews. At the premiere, the students who had worked on the DVD instead of a gleaming statue, they each took home a plaque to memorialize their project.



Instead of a gleaming statue, they each took home a plaque to memorialize their project.

Since the premiere, the DVD has been shown in classes and homes throughout Bearden. Teresa says one father had the family watch the DVD 11 times the night he got it. Besides satisfying legal requirements to inform parents, the DVD also can be used to help prepare transitioning students for their next school.

Shot in black-and-white, the DVD showcases all the schools in the district; introduces teachers, staff, and administrators; and features a variety of student activities. It also gives a big thank you to the parents who get involved in the schools.

Putting the DVD together was not easy. One of the biggest challenges was staff and administrative turnover between the two semesters, Teresa says. The students had shot a lot of interviews in the spring of 2005 only to discover those teachers and administrators were not coming back in the fall.

Equipment caused other problems. The audio is uneven, because the mic the students had to use was poor quality. And although the students had access to DVD burners, they could only burn a few at a time, which made burning 300 DVDs a daunting task. Teresa says a local business, Lockheed Martin, came to the rescue by loaning the students a burner that could do 25 at a time. Even then, Teresa had to pull an all-nighter as it took up to two hours to burn each batch.

Despite the hurdles, Teresa thinks the project was well worth the effort and has already made plans for sequels – well, actually, annual updates.

Meanwhile the students are working on other projects, such as a DVD for Future Business Leaders of America and one on the history of Bearden.